

BRIGHT Opportunities for Whitesburg Kentucky

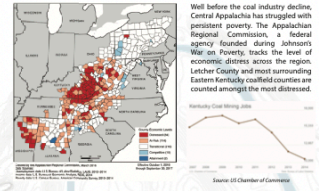
PINE MOUNTAIN PLANNING COLLABORATIVE

Appalshop

KEVIN FRASER MARLEY GREEN KATHRYN HENDLEY MARTHA MORRIS SUSAN RYU | UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA | PLAN 6010



Regional Context



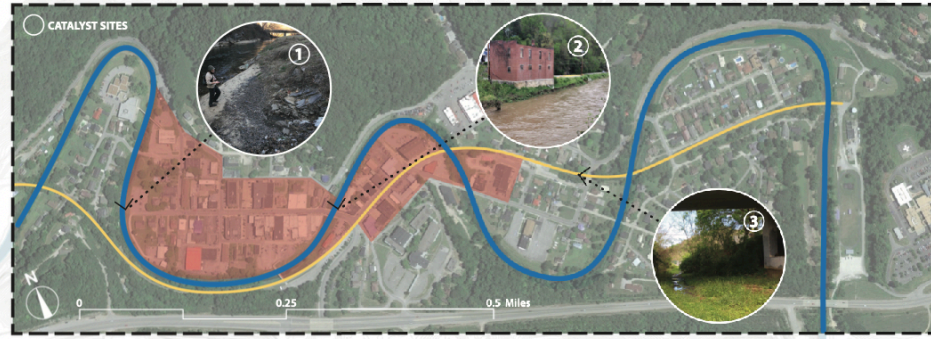
Background

Our Client
Since 1969, Appalshop has been enacting cultural organizing and place-based media, arts and education to document the life, celebrate the culture, and voice the concerns of people living in Appalachia and rural America. Appalshop is today helping to reimagine the region by bringing forth new and often unheard voices and visions from the people of this place and demonstrating the power of arts and culture to create meaningful social and economic change.

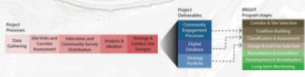
The BRIGHT Program
This project is in partnership with the BRIGHT program, a convening and research initiative of the Environmental Law Institute. BRIGHT - Bright Revitalization Initiative for Green Healthy Towns. The program works with organizations and municipalities to identify corridors of blighted properties in struggling neighborhoods, towns and cities, and then to assess their potential for revitalization through sustainable, environmentally restorative development. The program process in initial pilot locations will be documented and presented in a "Bright Revitalization Toolkit" to guide practitioners and citizens in future revitalization efforts.

Our Corridor
The study corridor encompasses a centrally located, 250-acre section of the city stretching from the pedestrian bridge west of downtown to Riverside Park. It includes the downtown commercial area, Farmers Market and festival pavilion, and residential neighborhoods. Appalshop's media center is located within the corridor as well. A former railway track that used to pass along East Main Street and through town provides a well-graded right-of-way. At the western edge of the study corridor and beyond to Hazard Road a paved multi-use trail occupies this right-of-way, but the trail ends abruptly at the start of East Main Street. The North Fork Kentucky River is crossed multiple times by vehicle and pedestrian bridges within the corridor's boundaries.

Study Corridor

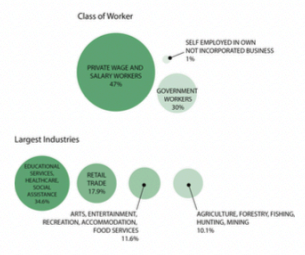
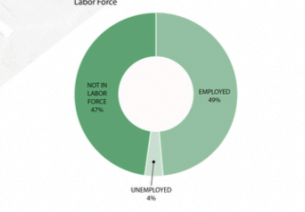


Process



Local Economy

Only half of Whitesburg's population is in the labor force. More than a quarter of those who are employed work for the government. Whitesburg is home to both Letcher County and Whitesburg's government buildings, which are large employers in the city. Almost 80 percent of employed residents are private wage and salary workers and only 1 percent owns their own business. This suggests that barriers exist to entrepreneurship in Whitesburg.



Problem Statement
The Whitesburg community has shown a lack of trust in the North Fork Kentucky River due to long-standing poor quality. Multiple attempts have been made to raise water quality but addressing the multiple causes of nonpoint pollution have achieved limited results, so local water advocates want complementary approaches for improving the riverfront.

Goals
- Improve riverfront quality and public perception of the North Fork Kentucky River
- Create more opportunities for positive experiences along the riverfront
- Remediate and prevent stormwater pollution and erosion

Strategies
- Add public amenities and message boards along the river
- Extend river stewardship program
- Address stormwater erosion with a green infrastructure pilot project on public parking lot

Problem Statement
Downtown Whitesburg has a distinct historic character and culture but has challenges with vacant buildings, commercial development, and pedestrian connectivity through the corridor.

Goal
- Strengthen Downtown Whitesburg's role as a local and regional cultural and economic destination

Strategies
- Use historic preservation resources on federal and state level to support building rehabilitation
- Consolidate commercial development requests on city website
- Consider vacant building inventory, evaluating for restoration or higher use order for vacant buildings
- Organize historic walk building tour
- Invest in public infrastructure in downtown commercial core to promote connectivity and sense of place

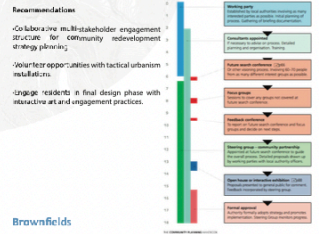
Problem Statement
Whitesburg's downtown trail offers a fantastic amenity for the community that has the potential to improve transportation, public health, and quality of life. At present, however, it lacks definition, cohesion, and a distinct character.

Goals
- Improve visibility and awareness of Whitesburg's existing trail
- Improve connections between recreational local destinations in order to create alternative transportation opportunities
- Create a sense of place that speaks to Whitesburg's history, culture, and natural environment
- Use trail development initiatives to enhance health and wellbeing

Strategies
- Implement wayfinding, interactive signage, and public art opportunities
- Increase trail use for public health outcomes
- Increase awareness of the trail and to bonds through pop up programming

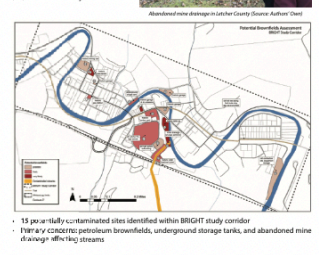


Community Engagement



Brownfields

This project initiated a comprehensive level of aerial brownfields in Whitesburg, one of the key steps in the BRIGTH methodology. Methods used to identify potential brownfield sites within and around the BRIGHT corridor included working with local residents, consulting state resources, and checking historic airbase maps. Jerome Whitesburg reports provided the majority of the information by noting previous uses and level of confidence in probably noncontamination on printed base maps provided for the study.



15 previously-unknown sites identified within BRIGHT study corridor. Primary concerns: petroleum brownfields, underground storage tanks, and abandoned mine drainage/effluent streams.